Special Article.

Political Evolution of Muslim India

By **MOMTAZ-UL-HUQ**

THE Muslims came to India as conquerors and settled here centuries ago, just as the Aryans did thousands of years ago. Originally, India belongs neither to the Hindus nor to the Muslims, but to the aboriginals. The Aryans defeated and dominated the original residents of India by virtue of superior culture civilization and strength. So did the Muslims, with this difference that they did not dominate the then inhabitants of this vast subcontinent as completely and as ruthlessly as the Aryans did. This is history put in a nut-shell.

The sturdy Pathans and the mighty Mughals ruled over India but none could subjugate the whole of it. Akbar brought under his suzerainty vast tracts of India, but he sought to bring about an amalgam of Muslim and Hindu cultures under a new system of religion, called "Din-i-Ilahi", but failed, though he himself married a Hindu princess and got one of his sons married to another Hindu princess. Of the Mughal Emperors, Aurangzeb alone made mighty efforts to establish a truly Islamic empire. His weak successors, however, failed to keep it up. The mighty Mughal empire crumbled to pieces.

The Marhatta hero, Sivajee, sought to establish Hindu sovereignty in India but did not succeed, mainly because of Aurangzeb's might. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, far-reaching changes took place in the far-flung Bengal where the sun of Muslim glory and Indian independence set in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, through the treachery of Muslim and Hindu potentates and fortune-hunters. In the memorable words of Rabindranath, "scale of the merchants came to be the sceptre of administration at the end of that gloomy night."

New Opportunities

The British rule in India was gradually established. The Hindus, as seasoned opportunists, adapted themselves to the new administration and took the fullest advantage of the new opportunities. Their spirit of independence was gone by centuries of subjugation immediately preceding. The Muslims, however, got dazed by the severe blow. They could not acclimatize themselves so easily under the changed environments. The glamour of the glory gone by still haunted their minds. But alas! they were on the downward grade, just as night followeth the dazzling day. It is Nature's dispensation and retribution.

English supplanted Persian as the Court language, and threw open the flood-gates of Western culture, civilization and sentiments to India. The country got westernized rapidly at least in general outlook on forms of government. Muslim conservatism stood in the way: they did not move with the times. After a century of British rule came the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. It was, more or less, an attempt at throwing off the foreign yoke. The attempt failed with disastrous consequences. The insurgents were ruthlessly dealt with for their insurrection.

The Hindus, by then, advanced far in the domain of English education with its concommitant advantages in the realm of political power and privilege. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan before whose eyes the scenes of Sepoy Mutiny passed with lurid light and shade, read the future of the Muslims aright. In 1872, he sponsored the scheme of Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. The school section was opened in 1875. On the 8th January, 1877, the foundation of the Aligarh College was laid by Lord Lytton, the then Governor-General of India. The Aligarh inspiration spread far and wide in Muslim India. The All-India Muslim Educational Conference also played its part in inspiring the Muslims with the ideals of English Education and modern culture.

Fore-taste

The All-India Congress came into being in 1885. It made rapid strides and rose to be a powerful political organization. Sir Syed kept aloof from the Congress. He felt that unless the Muslims were strong, educationally and culturally, there could be no real collaboration and co-ordination between the advanced and the back-ward. The Councils Act of 1892 threw political opportunities to Indians. The results of elections, however, gave the Muslims a rude shock. The best of the Muslims could not get in owing to the narrow-visioned machinations of the majority. Then came the Bengal Partition and the wave of Swadeshi Movement in its wake. This gave the Muslims fore-taste of what was in the offing of the Hindu nationalist movement.

In August 1906, Lord Minto constituted a committee comprising prominent Indians and other for the extension of Provincial Legislatures. The Muslim leaders of India sat at Lucknow for formulating the Muslim demands. In October following a memorandum signed by 35 leading Muslims of India was submitted to the Viceroy under the leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan. The deputation interalia demanded separate representation for the Muslims, Lord Minto conceded the Muslim view-point in the following words: "Any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of the continent."

Birth of League

In December, 1906, the All-India Muslim Educational Conference was called at Dacca at the instance of Nawab Sir Salimullah of revered memory. The Conference concluded on the 29th December. On the 30th December, the All-India leaders met, under the presidency of Nawab Viqarul Mulk Mushtaq Husain Bahadur, at the Conference pandal to set up a political organisation of Muslim India. On the motion of Nawab Sir Salimullah, seconded by Hakim Ajmal Khan and supported by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and others present, including Nawab Mohsen-ul.Mulk, Messrs Hasan Imam, Shaukat Ali, Muhammad Ali, Sahebzada Aftab Ahmad Khan, etc., the resolution to start the "All-India Muslim League" was unanimously adopted at Jehangirnagar (modern Dacca). where the Conference took place at the initiative and expense of Sir Salimullah, the acknowledged Leader of East Bengal and Assam, then welded into one Province.

Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk and Nawab Mohsen-ul Mulk were elected Joint-Secretaries of the League. The task of drafting the constitution was entrusted to a Sub-Committee. The Constitution of the League was adopted at its special session at Aligarh in March, 1907. The League held its first annual session at Karachi in December following under the presidency of Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy. His Highness the Aga Khan was then elected its President and Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk its Secretary. Provinciel branches were also organized. Thus the Muslim League came into being as a political organization of Muslim India.

Separate Electorates

In 1909, the Right Hon'ble Syed Ameer Ali led a deputation on behalf of Muslim India and waited upon the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley, in London. The deputation, *interalia*, urged that the Muslims "have common ideals, and by traditions of race and religion, from a nationality quite apart from all other peoples in India." Lord Morley and the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, acknowledged the weight of the deputation's arguments and the justice of the Muslim cause in India. Thus the Muslim got separte electorates in the Morley-Minto Reforms, promulgated in 1909. Both in theHouse ofLords and the House of Commons, Lord Minto and Mr. Asquith admitted t separate electorates were nothing unusual, these were in vogue in Austria Bohemia, etc. and that the differences between the Muslim and the Hindus of India were due not only to religion but also to their culture and social traditions.

On the 12th of December, 1911, was announced the annulment of Bengal Partition at the Delhi Durbar. It was a stunning blow to the Muslims of India, in particular, of Bengal, and to

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